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# General Assembly

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*Official Records*

**87**th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 26 April 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

*In the absence of the President, Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 133** (*continued*)

**Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/65/691/Add.9)**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/65/691/Add.9, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/65/691/Add.8, Grenada has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the United Nations Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly takes due note of the information contained in this document?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 69** (*continued*)

**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance**

**(c) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster**

**Special commemorative meeting in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): This morning, the General Assembly, in accordance with resolution 65/131, of 15 December 2010, will devote a special commemorative meeting to the observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

(*spoke in English*)

Today we mark 25 years since the Chernobyl nuclear accident, the most severe accident in the history of the nuclear power industry, which caused a huge release of radionucleids over large areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The region's mostly rural economy was devastated and more than 300,000 people were uprooted from their homes. Livelihoods lost almost 25 years ago have yet to be fully recovered and numerous farming villages are still struggling to overcome poverty, exclusion and the stigma of contaminated regions.

The Chernobyl anniversary is an occasion both to remember the human cost of the disaster and to take stock of the many problems that still linger. But it is also a time to look ahead and seek solutions that hold promise for the affected communities and to renew our commitment to a safer future.

The General Assembly and the United Nations Development Programme have had an important role in the response to the Chernobyl disaster. The General

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Assembly first adopted a resolution on Chernobyl in December 1990, and in 2002 the Assembly adopted a resolution shifting its strategy on Chernobyl from that of emergency relief to one of long-term recovery and development. This new approach has already begun to yield practical results. The 2007 General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl designated the period of 2006 to 2016 as the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development for Chernobyl-affected Regions. The United Nations Action Plan on Chernobyl for the period up to 2016 was prepared as a framework for ensuring that the area fully overcomes the stigma it now suffers, communities take full control of their lives and normalcy becomes a realistic prospect.

Let us also acknowledge the Governments of the three countries most affected by Chernobyl — Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — for working to protect the affected populations from the effects of radiation and to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, as well as for their ongoing efforts to rebuild the affected areas and promote socio-economic development, thus building a better future for the communities.

We must recognize that much more remains to be done to promote the region's recovery. The affected communities require fresh investments, socio-economic development, new jobs and accurate information on how to live safely in conditions of low-dose radiation in some areas, and on healthy lifestyles in general. The resilience of those still coping with the disaster is remarkable, but they need our continued support. In that context, we welcome the outcomes of the pledging conference that took place last week in Kyiv, which raised over €550 million. We want to encourage the international community, the General Assembly and United Nations agencies to continue and increase their international cooperation on Chernobyl.

Finally, in view of the nuclear disaster in Japan, it is imperative that we demonstrate, through global solidarity and the continued commitment of all stakeholders, that we have the ability to bring an end to a nuclear legacy such as that of Chernobyl.

As we mark this anniversary, we stand in solidarity with those whose lives were changed by the tragedy. Only by working together will we be able to bring this region back to normal life fully. As we gather today, let us pay tribute to the memory of the victims and to the hundreds of thousands of disaster relief workers at the site of the Chernobyl tragedy.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

**The Secretary-General**: It is one thing to read about Chernobyl, another to see it for yourself. Anyone visiting that infamous site, as I did last week, will be profoundly moved — the giant reactor, encased in concrete, yet still deadly; the empty town and nearby villages, houses in ruin and the land contaminated. Chernobyl displaced hundreds of thousands of people and affected millions more. It cast a radioactive cloud across Europe, and a shadow around the world.

Yet, there is a larger and more encouraging story, one of international solidarity. Chernobyl was not a problem for Ukraine, Belarus or Russia alone. Chernobyl was our problem, a shared challenge for the world. That is why the United Nations has done everything possible to promote recovery. We have an Action Plan on Chernobyl and we are supporting the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development.

Echoing the past — echoing Chernobyl — events at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant remind us once again of the dangers of nuclear accidents.

Nuclear accidents respect no borders. They threaten human health and the environment. They disrupt the economy and devastate communities. They are global in effect. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster is a time for reflection and robust global debate.

Nuclear power will likely continue to be an important resource for many nations, and can be a part of a low-carbon-emission energy mix in our efforts to address climate change. But it has to become credibly safe, and globally so. In that regard, I pay tribute to President Viktor Yanukovych of Ukraine for his vision in organizing the Kiev Summit on Safe and Innovative Use of Nuclear Energy last week, long before issues of nuclear safety made had it back to the world's front pages.

At the Summit, I put forward a five-point strategy for a safer nuclear future. I called for a top-to-bottom review of current safety standards at the national and international levels. I advocated strengthening the work

of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on nuclear safety. I supported the holding of an IAEA ministerial meeting on nuclear safety in June. I raised the need to focus on the nexus between nuclear safety and natural disasters. I said that we needed a new cost-benefit analysis of nuclear energy. And I called for building a stronger connection between nuclear safety and nuclear security.

It is time to face the facts. Issues of nuclear power and safety are not purely matters of national policy; they are a matter of global public interest. That is why, in September, I will convene a meeting of world leaders to take a hard look at all these issues. It is time to undertake a serious global debate on this issue at the level of global leaders. We must treat nuclear safety as seriously as we treat nuclear weapons.

The images of Chernobyl will stay with me a long time. They have taken their place alongside others: the desolation of Kazakhstan's former nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk, which I visited one year ago; and the bravery and resilience of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — the Hibakusha — who I met in Japan last summer. The world is learning from these experiences.

In Chernobyl, I also saw signs of hope. The soil is still contaminated, but forestry projects are reviving the land. People are starting to return in small numbers. Last week, countries pledged €550 million to continue work on a new shelter for the damaged reactor. That shield is expected to last another 100 years.

What we need now is a shield to protect our wider world. A shield forged at the United Nations, with Members' help and support, that will ensure that nuclear power plants are sources of peaceful energy, not potential catastrophe. Twenty-five years ago, people chanted, "No more Chernobyls". Together, let us say that again today, and act.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Valentin Rybakov, Assistant to the President of Belarus on Foreign Policy.

**Mr. Rybakov** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): It is my honour to read out an address by our President, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, President of the Republic of Belarus, before this special meeting of the General Assembly dedicated to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster.

"On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, I am addressing the United Nations as the leader of the country that, by a tragic coincidence of circumstances, received the heaviest and still tangible impact of the radiation.

"For Belarus, the Chernobyl catastrophe resulted in thousands of square kilometres of contaminated land. It changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and caused damage in the billions to the economy of the country. Even for the much more powerful economy of the Soviet Union, it was an almost backbreaking burden. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, our young sovereign State found itself facing a huge spectrum of social and economic problems.

"In the 25 years that have elapsed since the accident, large-scale activities aimed at overcoming the consequences of the catastrophe and restoring the affected territories have been carried out unceasingly.

"We are guided by a clear, carefully considered strategy. In the years immediately following the accident, key attention was given to programmes aimed at resettling people in clean areas and at providing them with decent living conditions. At present, we are directing our efforts to economic revival and the sustainable development of the affected territories. Land re-cultivation and the cleaning of the lakes and rivers of Belarus all contribute to improving ecological security in the region.

"To this day Chernobyl's problems lie heavy on the shoulders of the Belarusian people. To overcome the consequences of the accident, Belarus spends $1.2 million a day. Just think about this figure. In spite of the fact that only a small proportion — less than 1 per cent — of that amount comes from the international community, I would like to express my appreciation to the United Nations and to donor countries for the assistance they have rendered to our country. We are especially thankful to those partners that do not engage in political games and do not build

their business on the sufferings of ordinary people.

"The Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions, proclaimed by the General Assembly in 2007, help to intensify such cooperation. It is necessary to fully and effectively implement the relevant United Nations action plan on Chernobyl. It is important, in the context of our cooperation, to move from holding conferences and symposiums to implementing projects in the affected territories that have concrete economic and social results.

"Of course, it is necessary to meet and discuss existing problems, but there is a far greater need to adopt modern technologies in agriculture and forestry in the affected areas that will result in profitable production and the creation of new jobs. It must become our common task to ensure that each and every cent carefully scraped together by the international community is delivered to the affected people and territories.

"In the 25-year period following the Chernobyl accident, the Republic of Belarus has accumulated invaluable theoretical, practical and organizational experience in overcoming the consequences of radiation's impact. The progress in overcoming the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant made by Belarus with the assistance of the United Nations, donor countries and charitable initiatives inspires a certain optimism.

"Today the attention of the international community is focused on the tragedy at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan. Our country is ready to share its scientific and practical experience in overcoming the consequences of this type of catastrophe. In dealing with the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl plant, we have proved that human compassion and sympathy, economic and scientific cooperation, persistence and consistent efforts to restore the regions affected can change the situation and provide an opportunity to build a better future for the people who live there.

"On this day, we call for adherence to these principles so that international support and assistance can have fruitful results for the benefit of peoples and countries."

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Assistant to the President of Belarus on Foreign Policy.

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Pankin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which became the worst technological catastrophe of the twentieth century in terms of its scope and complexity.

Today, at a memorial ceremony held in Chernobyl in connection with the anniversary, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said:

> "Today I have sent to our partners in other countries, including in the Commonwealth of Independent States, a proposal to ensure the safe development of nuclear energy in the world and the elimination of its tragic consequences. We will need to give thought to a new international convention in this area. We must do so in memory of those who suffered and to save humankind."

The President of Russia also said:

> "The Chernobyl issue, although it is a problem primarily for three countries — Russia, Ukraine and Belarus — is shared by the entire international community. We now need to build a new sarcophagus for the reactor, and 28 countries have pledged to make donations. Russia is also ready to make a contribution to the Chernobyl containment fund in the amount of 45 millions euros."

The Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States, at a meeting held in Moscow in December 2010, launched an appeal to the international community to intensify cooperation aimed at mitigating the consequences of that catastrophe and at ensuring the recovery of the areas affected.

We deeply appreciate the courage and selflessness of the hundreds of thousands of Chernobyl disaster relief workers, who, putting their health and their lives at risk, fulfilled their duty and protected people from the harmful effects and further spread of

radiation. Paying tribute to the memory of the victims, the heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States proclaimed 26 April as the International Day Commemorating Victims of Radiation Accidents and Catastrophes in the States members of the Commonwealth.

More than 200,000 Russian nationals took part in emergency relief operations in the aftermath of the disaster. Over 59,000 square kilometres, encompassing 14 regions of Russia, were contaminated. Approximately 3 million Russian people lived in those territories.

Despite the large-scale emergency response measures aimed at addressing and mitigating the consequences of the catastrophe taken both immediately following it and in subsequent years, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant remains a potential source of danger. Minimizing this threat in the near future through the use of new technologies is in everyone's interest. There is therefore a need to utilize the scientific, technical and financial capacity of the entire international community.

In the Russian Federation, efforts to minimize the effects of the Chernobyl disaster are focusing on overcoming the negative health-related, social and psychological consequences of the disaster, improving the living standards of the population in the affected areas and helping to restore normal conditions.

In this context, a number of programmes are being implemented in Russia. The federal budget funds provided between 1992 and 2010 for programme-related measures carried out in the vicinity of Chernobyl, at the prices for the corresponding years, are approximately 10 billion rubles.

As I have said, the consequences of Chernobyl were felt in a number of countries. The Russian Federation is working with other countries and international organizations on matters related to overcoming the consequences of the disaster. Cooperation between Russia, Belarus and Ukraine has been developing actively. Russia is an active participant in the Chernobyl Forum. The Russian Federation's Ministry of Emergency Situations manages Russian involvement in projects undertaken with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization and UNICEF in order to overcome the negative consequences of the catastrophe.

Russia attaches particular importance to further international cooperation on Chernobyl. In that connection, we are convinced that it is necessary that the work in the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006-2016), as proclaimed by resolution 62/9, be continued and stepped up.

The United Nations should be the catalyst in coordinating international cooperation with respect to Chernobyl. We therefore support the efforts of the UNDP Administrator to put the United Nations action plan on Chernobyl to 2016 into action. We welcome the active participation of all concerned United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the IAEA and other international organizations in its implementation. We would also like to commend the contribution made by tennis player Maria Sharopova, the UNDP Goodwill Ambassador for Chernobyl.

It is important to us to keep the emphasis in this work on the sustainable development of the territories affected by radiation. We therefore consider the adoption by consensus of resolution 65/131 on Chernobyl in December 2010 to be the confirmation of the international community's solidarity with the efforts of affected States and its readiness to continue to pay necessary attention to Chernobyl issues at the international level.

We welcome the results of the International Conference on Chernobyl held in Kyiv last week. We are convinced that these results will contribute to the development of an important area of international cooperation, such as strengthening readiness to respond to technological disasters, in particular those associated with radioactive accidents. In the context of new challenges and threats to our civilization, such cooperation is more relevant than ever before. The experience of the Russian Federation's Ministry for Emergency Situations and its readiness to explore international cooperation in this field are well known.

We highly appreciate the international assistance extended to the Government of Ukraine and call on all partners to continue their efforts to complete the construction of the shelter facility in order to transform the site into a stable and environmentally safe system.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Sergeyev** (Ukraine): Twenty-five years have passed since 26 April 1986, when the hearts of people were marked with pain and sorrow for the lost lives of their relatives and the future of millions of people was destroyed. The Chernobyl catastrophe has led to the pollution of more than 145,000 square kilometres of territory in Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation. We remember and pay tribute to those who gave their lives to try to minimize and stop the spread of the atomic radiation emission caused by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

Having experienced a nuclear disaster, the people of Ukraine understand the recent Japanese tragedy as no other nation can. Ukraine understands and shares the sorrow and expresses its sincere sympathy with the people of Japan for their losses during the recent natural disaster that led to the accident at the Fukishima power plant and the emission of radiation.

Chernobyl and the Japanese catastrophe have made us reconsider the destructive power of an uncontrolled atom. Intense discussions at both the national and international levels, as well as within the framework of the United Nations, have been resumed with the aim of working out a decision on the future of nuclear power plants and their safety for human activity, which reminds us once again of the urgency and timeliness of the nuclear safety issue.

We cannot ignore the benefits of nuclear energy as an environmentally clean, low-cost energy source, especially in the context of humankind's increased energy needs and the United Nations policy of sustainable development. However, the possession of nuclear technologies in the twenty-first century is not merely a prerogative; it is also a huge responsibility of the State before its own people, neighbouring countries and the whole world.

We are pleased to acknowledge productive discussions on the issue raised within the framework of the Kyiv Summit on the Safe and Innovative Use of Nuclear Energy and at the International Conference held in Kyiv last week under the theme was "Twenty-five Years After the Chernobyl Disaster: Safety for the Future". The declaration adopted there reaffirmed the importance of nuclear safety and demonstrated the willingness of States to continue to cooperate in this sphere. The first-ever visit to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by a Secretary-General of the United Nations highlighted the importance of these issues.

We concede that overcoming the consequences of nuclear disasters is not an achievable task for one generation or one State, especially when it comes to the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. A number of social and economic projects are being implemented in the Chernobyl-affected territories, and investments from the private and State sectors are being made, including from abroad.

In the light of the recent tragic events in Japan, our task is to reconsider the degree of measures taken to transform the Chernobyl power plant into an ecologically safe system and to evaluate the level of nuclear safety at all Ukrainian nuclear power plants. In this regard, I would like to emphasize the role of the international community, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the transformation of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant into an ecologically safe system.

As the country that has to cover the main part of expenditures in nuclear disaster aftermath mitigation, Ukraine is grateful for the international solidarity and support that have been shown for its national efforts. We highly appreciate the States' contributions through the conference of donors to the Chernobyl Fund on the completion of Chernobyl-related projects, including the shelter project. We cannot fail to mention the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development and its significant role as the administrator the Chernobyl Shelter Fund and the Nuclear Safety Account. We welcome the creation of the international scientific centre on the exploration of technological risks related to the use of nuclear energy, under the auspices of the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Chernobyl issue remains an important item on the United Nations agenda, in particular within the framework of the General Assembly. We welcome the fact that resolution 65/131 on the examination, mitigation and minimization of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster was adopted by consensus in December 2010. Seventy-four States Members of the United Nations sponsored the resolution.

The overall solution to the Chernobyl issue remains a priority for Ukraine. I believe that the implementation of the United Nations Decade of

Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions will meet expectations.

Twenty-five years after the disaster, we take note of our achievements and acknowledge the tasks that remain before us in the complete rehabilitation of the affected areas and in returning normal life to the population. Ukraine fully supports the activities of agencies led by the UNDP, in the light of the realization of the 10-year United Nations action plan for Chernobyl to 2016. We believe that the complete rehabilitation of normal life in the affected territories can be achieved only through the joint efforts of the international community.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silent prayer or meditation for the victims of the Chernobyl disaster.

*The Assembly observed a minute of silence.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Niger, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

**Mr. Abani** (Niger): On behalf of the Group of African States, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this solemn event as a special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly in observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

At the outset therefore, and as we remember this sorrowful event, I wish to convey to you, Madame, and through you to the people of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus, the deep prayers of the African Group at the United Nations, and in particular those of the entire people of Africa.

Resolution 65/131 of 15 December 2010 requested a commemoration of the silver jubilee of the Chernobyl disaster of 26 April 1986. This event, as well as the recent earthquake and tsunami that led to the damage of nuclear reactors in Japan, have become compelling reminders that we cannot be too careful with the issue of nuclear safety. The need to develop a response to nuclear disasters of such proportions as Chernobyl cannot, therefore, be overstressed. These events have shown that, ultimately, no State is immune to either natural disasters or accidents that could leave its people traumatized and constitute a potential human, environmental and economic tragedy for its neighbours.

Twenty-five years ago, the world woke up to the realization that, despite our many achievements, advances and scientific innovations, humanity is not yet fully immune to human errors. We are still at risk from future disasters that could occur as a result of inadvertent human errors or natural disasters. After all, we are all a part of one global environment. In view of this, we are encouraged by resolutions 45/190, 46/150, 47/165, 48/206 and 50/134.

We note the huge economic cost of the disaster and welcome resolution 65/131 on the role of the United Nations in the strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, including community-based development projects and support for investment promotion in the affected areas. In the words of the Secretary-General, science has shown that normal life is fully possible for most people living in areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster. What is needed, therefore, is recovery and development based on fresh investment, employment opportunities and the restoration of a sense of community.

We wish to encourage the Governments of the affected countries not to relent in their efforts to implement national strategies to address new challenges by strengthening ongoing humanitarian programmes and to remain open to international cooperation. We welcome the initiative of the Government of Ukraine, supported by the Russian Federation and Belarus, to convene an international conference entitled "Twenty-five Years after the Chernobyl Disaster: Safety for the Future" last week in Kyiv.

The African Group also wishes to highlight the importance of the full implementation of the third decade after the Chernobyl disaster, 2006-2016, the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions, as proclaimed in resolution 62/9. We view this as a positive development, which is focused on achieving the goal of a return to normal life for the affected communities within the specified time frame. We call on the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl to continue work towards the realization of the United Nations action plan on Chernobyl, in collaboration with the

Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Finally, we wish to thank all international partners — including the United Nations Development Programme, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, the World Health Organization, the World Bank and the Chernobyl Forum — for their untiring efforts in this recovery process. We also hope that the existing solidarity among the affected people and States will be sustained by the need for continued cooperation to overcome the last vestiges of the tragedy.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

**Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Asian Group at this special commemoration on this day marking the 25th anniversary of a terrible catastrophe.

When Reactor No. 4 exploded 25 years ago today at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, the peaceful use of nuclear power took its first calamitous turn, and the world shook. No corner of our planet would subsequently not hear of the disaster or feel its effects in some way. And for the more than 160,000 people living close by, their lives were changed profoundly by the explosion and subsequent fire. Many were exposed to unsafe levels of radiation in the initial two days and were then forced suddenly to leave all they had, to live the rest of their lives anxiously with the knowledge of what health-related possibilities lay ahead of them.

And yet, within this tragedy, there existed inspiring acts of such supreme courage on the part of a large number of disaster relief workers and engineers — like those heroic plant workers at Fukushima — that no expression of gratitude by us could ever repay the debt the world owes them. These are people like Anatoly Tkachuk, who led a four-person team into the sarcophagus placed over Reactor No. 4 eight months after the accident to assess the condition of the reactor, and was the only one to have survived the experience.

In this connection, the Asian Group is pleased with the outcome of the high-level meeting held in Kyiv on 19 April, at which $785 million were pledged for the replacement of the sarcophagus, in the form of a new 20,000-tonne steel shield soon to be placed over the reactor.

For the Asian Group, today's event cannot be separated from the still fresh and continuing news reports reaching us from the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan. Jointly, both nuclear disasters — the only two to have reached a 7 on the severity scale — stand as reminders of just how much damage poor management, in the case of Chernobyl, or an earthquake, in the case of Fukushima, can inflict on humankind and the environment.

That exacts a price so considerable that it will no doubt dent our belief that we are able to continue to harness physics in complete and assured safety, at least for the foreseeable future. And yet, both events will no doubt also serve to guide us to eventually improve engineering methods and designs, both of which will enable us to continue to deliver that much-needed energy source to humanity.

The Asian Group stands with the Government and the people of Ukraine on this solemn occasion, as well as with the Governments and the peoples of the other most directly affected countries, Belarus and the Russian Federation. Most particularly, however, we express our sympathies to and solidarity with the victims who have suffered the most: those who were in the closest proximity to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant exactly 25 years ago today. They are in our thoughts.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European States.

**Mr. Čekuolis** (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States on the occasion of the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, the world's worst nuclear accident.

Every year, we commemorate the tragic event in Chernobyl, the symbol of catastrophe for millions of people in Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation. On 26 April 1986, Unit 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant exploded, releasing a vast amount of nuclear radiation into the atmosphere. The disaster

unexpectedly reached global proportions. Millions of people in Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation were exposed to the radiation and still suffer its consequences. The vast amount of radiation released into the atmosphere also affected many European States. Thousands of people in the worst-contaminated areas were traumatized, displaced from their homes and left to face acute economic difficulties and chronic health problems. Today, we pay tribute to the memory of all of the victims: those who lost their lives during the explosion, the brave ones who gave their lives in striving to contain the effects of the explosion in the immediate aftermath, and those who subsequently suffered from diseases caused by the pollution.

Allow me to also take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, other specialized agencies and programmes, the European Union, individual countries and civil society organizations for their response and continued assistance in overcoming the consequences of the disaster.

After 25 years, the impact of the Chernobyl catastrophe in the affected areas is still present. Much remains to be done. Several million people still live in the affected areas on radiation-contaminated soil. The scope and complexity of the humanitarian, environmental, medical, psychological and economic consequences created a problem of common concern. In that respect, I would like to stress in particular the role of the United Nations Development Programme in strengthening international cooperation in mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. It is of the utmost importance to ensure that the United Nations strategy for Chernobyl and the United Nations action plan aimed at implementing the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006-2016) are implemented in an effective and timely manner.

The unfolding events at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear plant, caused by the earthquake and the tsunami that struck Japan on 11 March remind us of the importance of strengthening nuclear safety and of responding promptly to nuclear accidents and emergencies. These events demonstrate that nuclear safety is enhanced when the global community works together to meet those challenges. On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to express our solidarity with the people of Japan and respect for their fortitude and endurance.

I would like to stress that many hard lessons have been learned from the Chernobyl disaster. More should be drawn from the recent tragic events in Japan. Those recent events have proved once again that, more than ever before, we must all must ensure that nuclear safety is the most important priority for every single country that decides to develop its civil nuclear programme. We must guarantee that the highest nuclear security and safety standards will be respected during the entire nuclear power plant cycle. We must ensure that cooperation and the exchange of best practices in the fields of planning, building and operating nuclear facilities contribute to the enhancement of nuclear safety. We must also strive to ensure worldwide adherence to the relevant international conventions.

The Chernobyl disaster, that devastating tragedy, should never be forgotten. We should do everything possible, collectively and individually, to prevent another nuclear disaster anywhere in the world.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Barbados, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

**Mr. Goddard** (Barbados): It is my honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC).

Exactly 25 years ago, the world witnessed the worst accident in the history of the nuclear power industry. The disaster at Chernobyl was a major catastrophe. It caused the release of large amounts of radioactive materials, which affected large areas of what are now the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine. The environmental, humanitarian, health, social and economic impacts continue to be felt to this day.

Today, we pay tribute to the lives lost as a result of the tremendous catastrophe. Innocent victims included residents, emergency workers and plant workers, who paid the ultimate price. We also express our concern for and solidarity with the men and women who continue to suffer the consequences. Chernobyl affected the entire international community. The tragedy touched us to the core. It changed not only the communities involved, but also attitudes to nuclear power on a global scale.

We are encouraged by growing evidence that we have learned a number of lessons from the tragedy. In the aftermath of the incident, a number of issues have come under review, including international radiation standards, strategies for improving the nuclear engineering process, safety standards, and procedures and processes for managing nuclear waste. Nearly a quarter of a century later, efforts have already begun to reassess the situation in the affected areas with a view to developing new policies and strategies for recovery.

We welcome the findings of the Chernobyl Forum, which, while acknowledging that certain negative effects would persist for decades to come, have shown that an improvement in the present circumstances is a realistic prospect for people living in the affected regions.

The need for international cooperation continues, especially in the area of research and follow-up studies, in order to cope with the health consequences and the long-term environmental impact of the disaster. The GRULAC region has offered significant cooperation assistance to the affected countries and will continue to lend our strong support.

In the words of the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in his statement at the International Conference on Chernobyl: Twenty-Five Years On:

> "More than ever before, our watchword must now be 'safety first'. Safety first, when countries review their existing nuclear power plants, when they plan and build new facilities, and when engineers design innovative new reactors."

GRULAC expresses its support for the leading role that the IAEA has played and is continuing to play in providing guidance and standards for safety and security in the use of nuclear power. We hope that at the upcoming IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety, high-level Government officials will advance the progress already made in this area. We look to countries which are interested in expanding their present nuclear programmes, or which are considering introducing nuclear power, to implement the highest possible safety standards.

In concluding, I suggest that our best tribute to the victims of this tragedy is to ensure that the lessons learned from the accident will bring about lasting improvements in nuclear and radiation safety.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

**Mr. Wenaweser** (Liechtenstein): Today it is my honour to take the floor on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Twenty-five years have gone by since the Chernobyl tragedy, and it remains particularly present in our memories, both individual and collective. The recent, tragic events in Fukushima have once again brought Chernobyl to the forefront of public consciousness. Today, our thoughts go first to those people who continue to suffer from the consequences of the catastrophe, in particular in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, but also in other parts of the world where many affected families sought refuge. We continue to be concerned by the health problems affecting the lives of so many children, women and men. We are also aware of the environmental, economic and social consequences of the catastrophe.

While a tragedy of such enormous proportions can never be erased from our memories, its effects must at last to some extent be compensated for. It is important to note that solidarity has been forthcoming from the entire international community on a truly historic scale. Many States took part in an unprecedented effort to mitigate environmental pollution and to assess the impact of the disaster on the health of people in order to treat them properly and to develop social and development programmes for nuclear safety.

The debates on the real impact of the disaster should prompt us to consolidate our efforts for the health of the people, for rehabilitation and for nuclear safety at the site. Ultimately, our objective is to allow for the sustainable development of the area around Chernobyl. In terms of nuclear safety, we attach special importance to respect by all for their international commitments. In this regard, it is important that work on the new shelter for Reactor No. 4 at the site be completed soon.

The word Chernobyl will, in the minds of entire generations, forever be linked to one of the greatest nuclear disasters our world has experienced. We must

reaffirm our determination to limit the effects of the disaster and to prevent similar such events in the future.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

**Mr. Barton** (United States of America): On behalf of the United States Mission to the United Nations and the American people, I would like to join Ukraine and the international community in marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

We gather here this morning to honour the victims of Chernobyl — the countless men, women, and children who lost their lives to the tragic events that transpired a quarter-century ago today. We especially pay tribute to the heroic sacrifice of the emergency workers who responded on that fateful April morning when an explosion in Unit 4 of the nuclear power station at Chernobyl triggered the most serious nuclear accident the world has ever known. The continued existence of a 30-kilometre exclusion zone around Chernobyl serves as a constant reminder of those events.

The international community continues to help those affected by the disaster deal with its devastating health and environmental consequences. Last week, at the Chernobyl pledging conference in Kyiv, the international community committed further financial resources towards completing a new safe confinement shelter and a storage facility for spent fuel at Chernobyl.

Since the tragedy, Ukraine has become a global leader in nuclear safety and security. From its historic renunciation of nuclear weapons in 1994 to its decision to get rid of its stocks of highly enriched uranium by the 2012 nuclear security summit in South Korea, Ukraine has positioned itself at the very forefront of global nuclear safety and innovation. The United States commends these efforts and supports Ukraine's global leadership on nuclear energy.

As the international community marks this solemn anniversary, we are following the grave situation at Japan's Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power plant. The events at Fukushima, Chernobyl and Three Mile Island remind us that nuclear safety is not strictly a national responsibility. This is why it is imperative that the international community continue to learn from these events and use that knowledge to ensure the safety and security of nuclear energy now and in the future.

We must take measures at all levels to ensure the safety and security of our nuclear industries. Investment in scientific research surrounding the safe disposal and storage of spent nuclear fuel is a priority. It is also our collective responsibility to build upon existing protocols to further international nuclear energy cooperation and emergency response. And finally, we must advance work towards a new generation of nuclear reactor designs with the most innovative safety features.

As we pause here today to reflect on the terrible events of 26 April 1986, the legacy of Chernobyl must strengthen our shared commitment to ensuring that nuclear safety remains at the forefront as we define the role nuclear power will play in our energy future.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 69?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.*